



NEWS

CONTACT: Tom Marshall
(916) 657-7202

Office of Public Affairs
2555 First Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95818

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CHP AIMING TO INCREASE SAFETY BELT USE

SACRAMENTO--For the second year in a row, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) will mount a major campaign against safety belt violators during the Thanksgiving holiday.

The campaign will include enforcement overtime for officers and an educational effort on billboards and in the media, including radio, television and newspapers.

The award-winning media campaign, "Remember or be Remembered," also aired during Thanksgiving 2002 and for two weeks in May 2003 including the Memorial Day holiday, putting special emphasis on safety belt use.

The Thanksgiving 2003 enforcement and education campaign completes a two-year, \$4 million program to increase safety belt compliance.

"Over 91 percent of Californians wear their safety belts." CHP Commissioner D. O. (Spike) Helmick said, "The other 8 percent should listen up or be prepared to get a citation."

The upcoming Thanksgiving buckle-up program is the last phase of a federal grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. It is managed by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to convince drivers that the CHP and local law enforcement are serious about safety belts.

The two earlier phases of the safety belt campaign showed significant increases in safety belt citations issued by CHP officers. The Thanksgiving 2002 campaign showed a 343 percent

increase in safety belt citations over the previous year and the May 2003 campaign, a 323 percent increase.

“We’ve done research which shows that most of the people who aren’t wearing belts haven’t gotten into the habit—they just forget,” Helmick said. “This is especially true on those short trips to the grocery or shopping mall. Unfortunately, that’s the time when another driver might run a stop sign or cross over the center line and cause a collision.”

Between 6 p.m. Wednesday, November 26 and midnight Sunday Nov. 30, the CHP will implement a Maximum Enforcement Period (MEP). “During this time, all available officers will be on the road working so families arrive safely and enjoy holiday celebrations,” Helmick said.

According to Helmick, the Thanksgiving MEP is also an Operation CARE (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) holiday. Operation CARE is a joint program of the nation’s highway patrols that places special safety emphasis on interstate highways during holiday periods. CARE highways in California include Interstates 80, 40, 15 (San Bernardino to the Nevada border) and 5 (Bakersfield north to the Oregon line).
